COMMONWEALTH DAY
IN THE SCHOOLS OF ONTARIO
MAY 15, 1959

ILLUSTRATIONS
OF THE

CANADIAN PARLIAMENT

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A FOREWORD FROM THE MINISTER

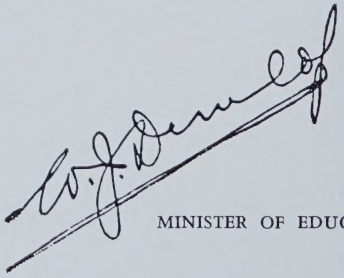
Every citizen should be familiar with the way in which our Parliaments work. Such knowledge helps us to understand and to appreciate the democratic processes on which our system of government is based.

Behind the procedures which we have evolved for conducting the nation's business there is a rich symbolism which has come down to us from the past. A knowledge of the origins of that symbolism in the beginnings of our history and of its significance today can only increase our respect for the wisdom of our forefathers in developing these processes. It must also increase our appreciation of our good fortune in inheriting them.

If I were asked to name one single feature which is most characteristic of the whole system of democratic government I would point to the principle that in a democracy the will of the majority, fairly arrived at, is accepted by all. The minority group, in our way of life, knows that, in due course, there will be another opportunity, another fair trial of opinion, and a chance that next time a minority may become a majority. That has happened over and over again and it is the basis of the fairest system of government that man has yet developed.

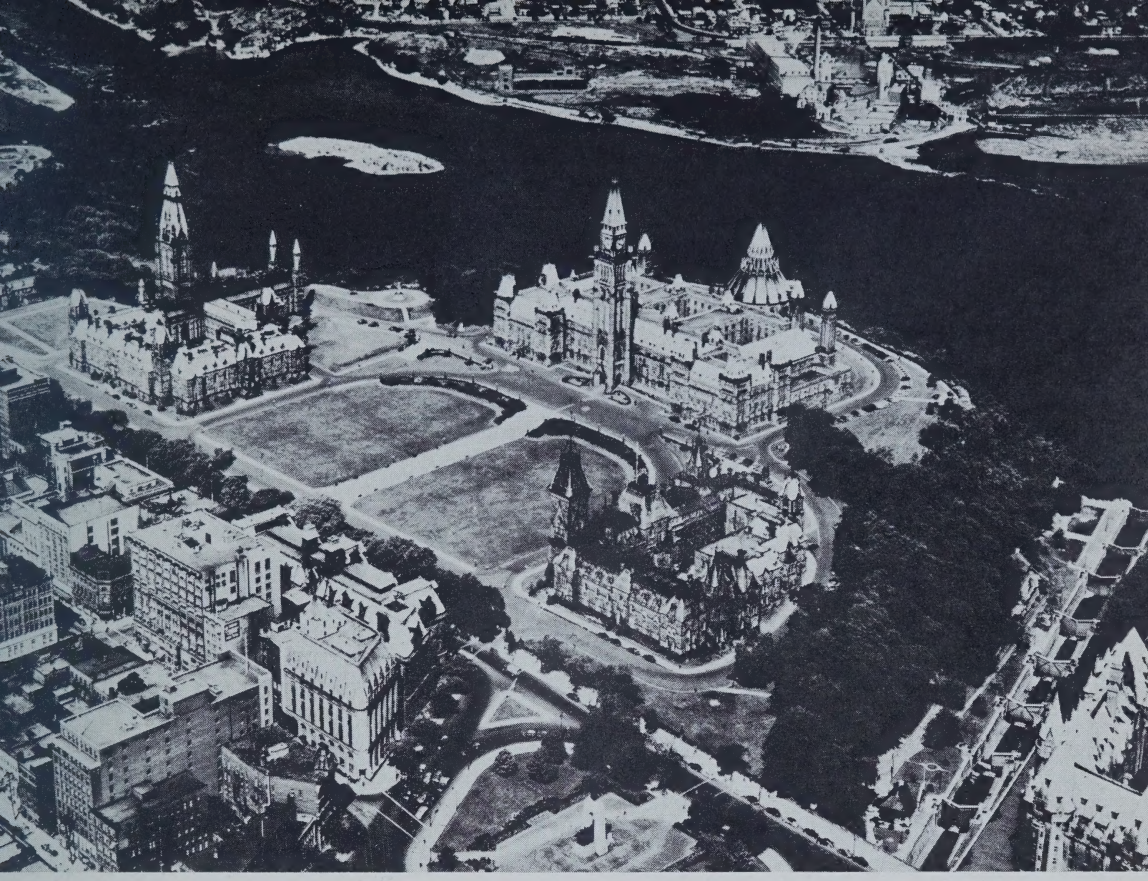
I trust that this booklet, used to provide material for lessons and studies in connection with the observance of Commonwealth and Citizenship Day, will be helpful in increasing our appreciation of our priceless heritage.

I should like to take this opportunity to remind teachers that the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway by Her Majesty the Queen, and the subsequent tour of Canada which the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh will make, offer a chance which should be utilized to the fullest extent for a series of preparatory lessons. Geography related to the event and to the economic importance of the Seaway, the early history of the region and the significance of the steps in international co-operation which have made the construction possible; these are topics from which every age or grade can derive something of importance. The constitutional position of the Queen in this and in other undertakings is a topic which merits frequent mention and emphasis.



MINISTER OF EDUCATION

Toronto, March 5, 1959.



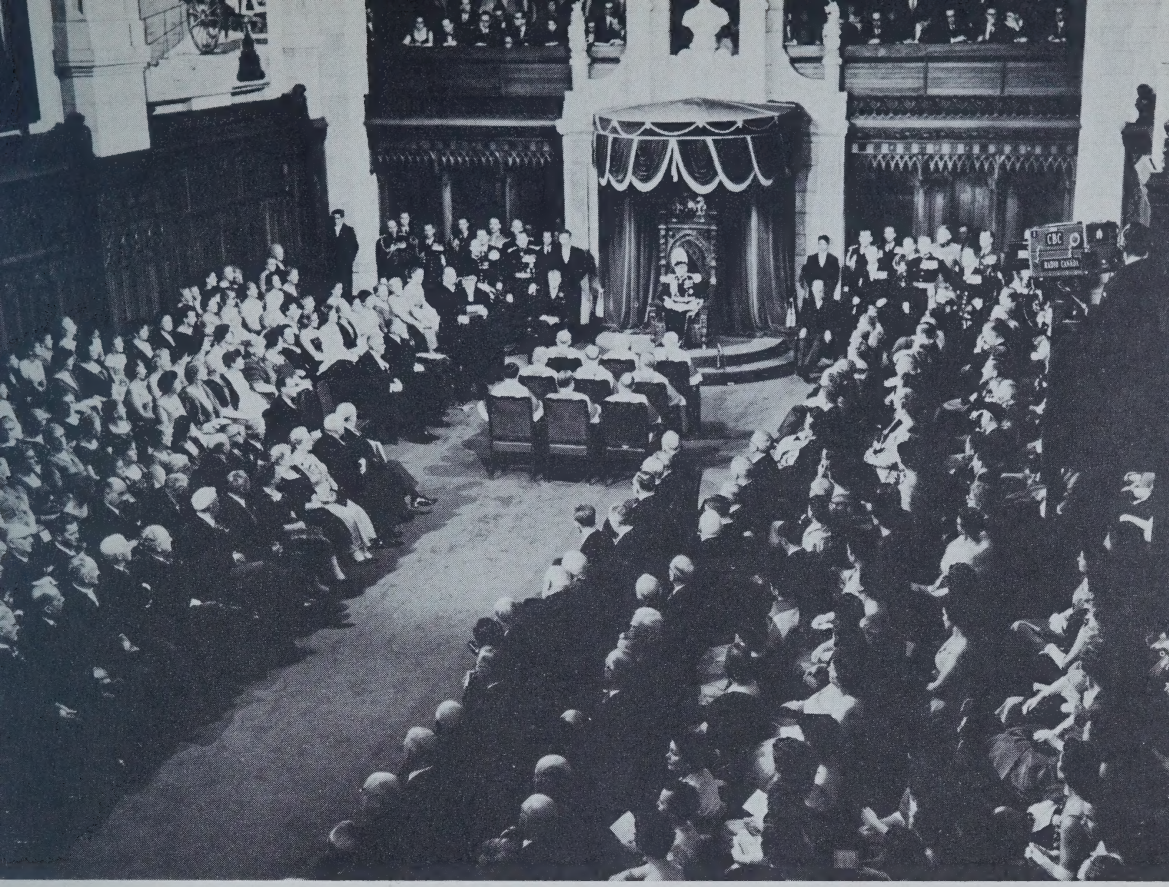
1. THE BUILDINGS OF PARLIAMENT

The main building with its tall Peace Tower in front and its circular Parliamentary Library behind stands on the edge of a high bank of the Ottawa River. This is the building which contains both the Senate Chamber and the House of Commons, together with committee rooms, and offices for the senators and members of parliament.

The original Parliament Building on the same site was destroyed by fire in 1916 and the present building was completed in 1920. The Library of Parliament was saved when the rest of the building burned in 1916, but the Library itself was badly damaged by fire in 1952.

The groups of buildings to the right and left of the broad lawn in front of the main buildings are known as the East and the West blocks. They also contain government offices.

Behind the Parliament buildings the Ottawa River can be seen, with floating logs beside a great paper mill, and across the river the city of Hull, Quebec. In the river at the far left can be seen the rapids coming from the Chaudiere Falls. At the right there are eight locks of the Rideau canal by which small boats can be raised from the river to the higher level of the canal. Beside the canal is a large hotel, the Chateau Laurier. In the foreground, the National War Memorial commemorates those who served and died in the First World War.



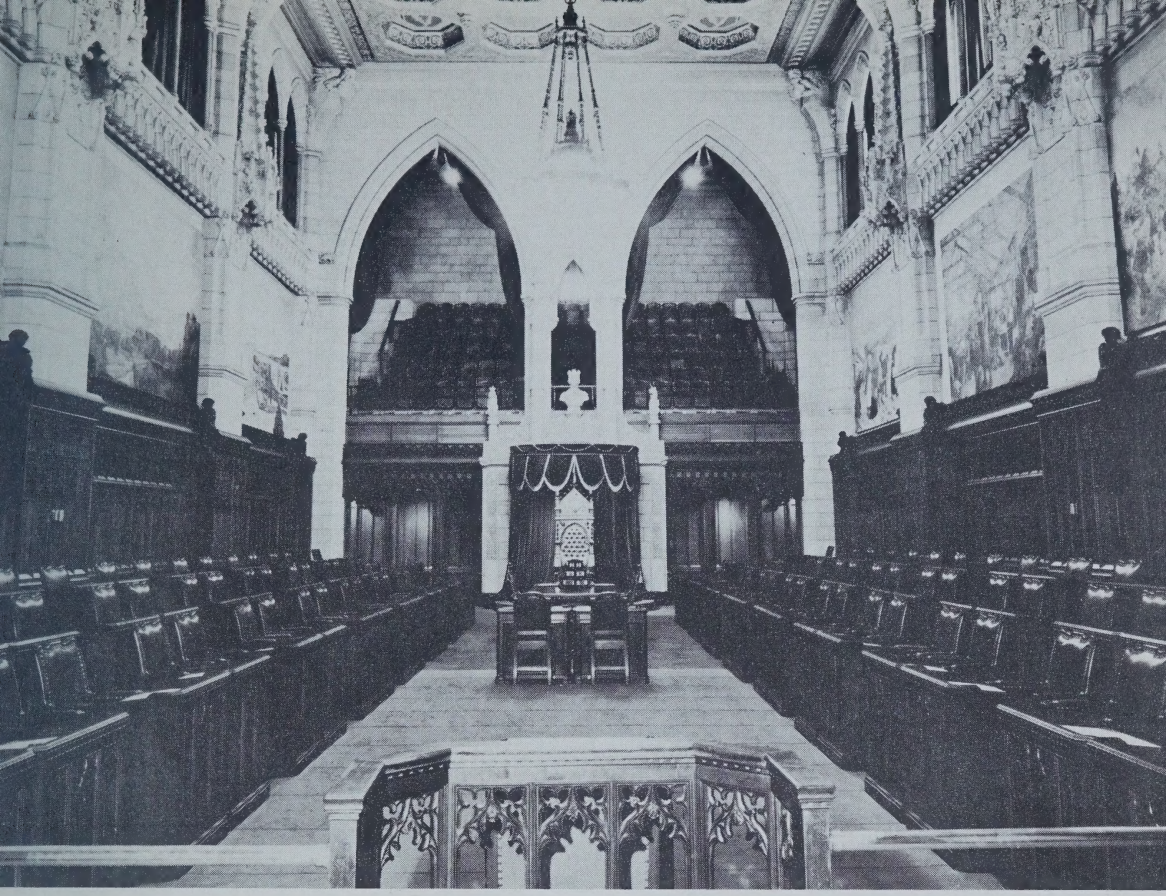
2. THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL

This is the Senate Chamber in the Parliament Buildings at Ottawa on May 12, 1958. The occasion is the opening of the 1st session of the 24th Parliament of Canada. The Governor-General of Canada, the Right Honourable Vincent Massey, is about to read the Speech from the Throne.

In October, 1957 Her Majesty the Queen, accompanied by Prince Philip, opened the session of Parliament and for the first time in Canadian history the Queen herself read the Speech from the Throne. On other occasions the Governor-General performs this duty, just as he performs all his other duties, in the Queen's name and as her personal representative.

If you compare this picture with the coloured photograph sent out last year, showing the Queen and Prince Philip, you will see that many of the details are the same. The Justices of the Supreme Court are in the same place, the aides-de-camp are there, the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Senate, and Black Rod. The senators' seats are occupied by visitors. The members of the House of Commons do not appear in the photograph but are standing at the Bar of the House.

This is the 24th Parliament; there have been 24 general elections since Confederation. This is its first session since the election of March, 1958.



3. THE SENATE CHAMBER

This is the meeting place of the Senate of Canada, with seats for the 102 senators. It is sometimes known as the Red Chamber because of the colour of the hangings, the carpet, and the upholstery of the chairs. The chair under the canopy is used by the Governor-General when he opens or closes sessions of parliament. Two thrones were provided when the Queen, accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh, opened Parliament in October, 1957. Under ordinary circumstances the Speaker of the Senate presides.

In the foreground there is a carved wooden gate and two brass rails extending the width of the aisle. This is the Bar of the House. No one but senators or officials are allowed inside this barrier. When the members of the House of Commons are summoned by Black Rod to hear the Speech from the Throne, as many of them as can do so crowd in and stand at this rail, but not inside it. This may seem odd when you can see that a great many visitors are to be seen in the Senate Chamber in picture No. 2. Openings of parliament have come to be social occasions but the ancient tradition of separate upper and lower houses is still observed.

The other occasion when the Bar of the House is significant is when someone who has committed an offence against Parliament is summoned to appear and stands at the Bar for trial of his case.

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4. THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

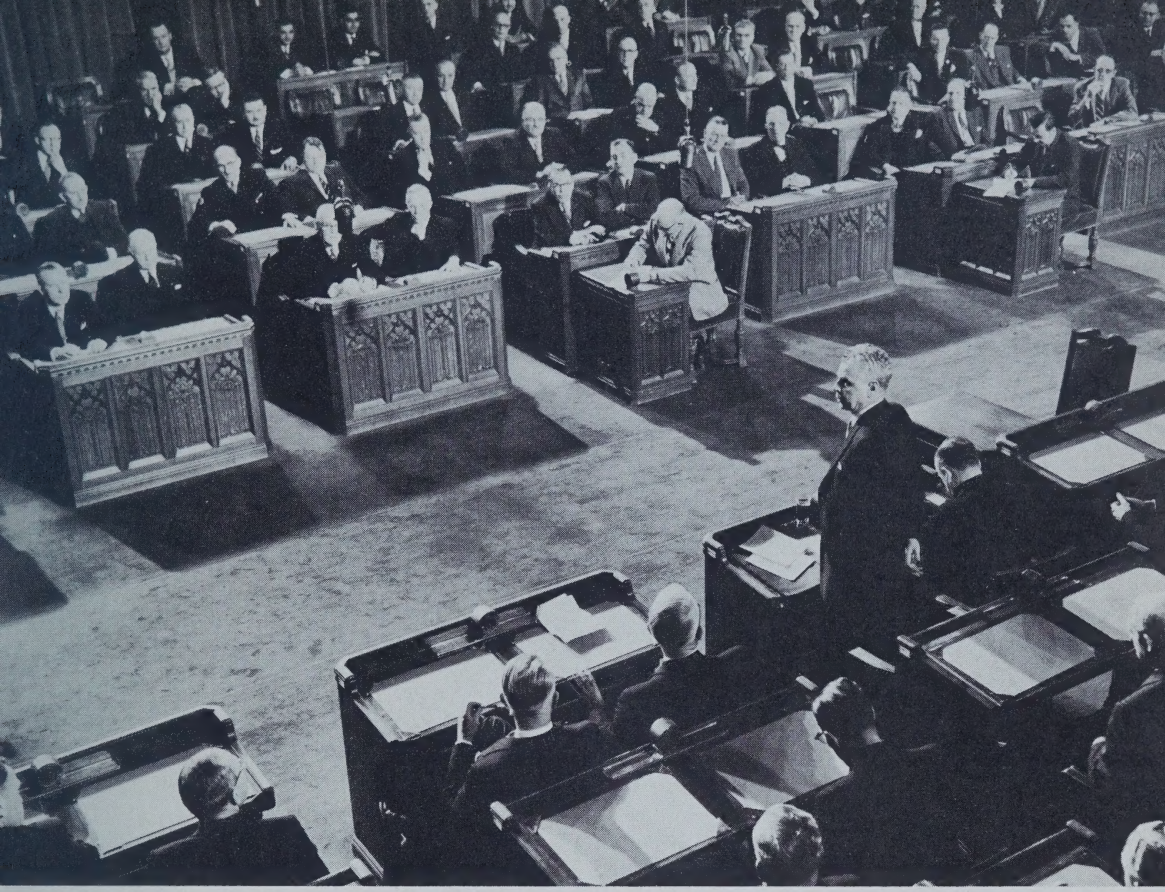
The British North America Act, clause 44, says that *The House of Commons, on its first assembly after a General Election, shall proceed with all practicable speed to elect one of its members to be Speaker.* He is usually chosen from the majority party but is expected, while he is in the chair, to be above party and to be absolutely fair to all members.

The office of Speaker is a very ancient one, and there are records of the names of Speakers of the English parliament as far back as the year 1258. The office is also a very important one since the Speaker must preside at all meetings and nothing can be done in his absence. His rulings about procedure must be accepted, and his permission to speak must be obtained. Even the Prime Minister must address his remarks to the Speaker. When the Speaker is not in his place, the Mace, the symbol of the power of the Commons, is removed from the table.

Although he presides the Speaker does not ordinarily have a vote. The B.N.A. Act says *Questions arising in the House of Commons shall be decided by a majority of voices other than that of the Speaker, and when the voices are equal, but not otherwise, the Speaker shall have a vote.*

In the illustration the Speaker has just been chosen and is declaring his willingness to act. When presiding over a session he wears a black gown and a three-cornered hat.

Around the Speaker's chair are a number of page boys who act as messengers.



5. THE HOUSE OF COMMONS IN SESSION

The members of the majority party in the House of Commons, sometimes referred to as the Government party, sit on the side of the House (the foreground in this picture) which is on the Speaker's right side as he faces the table. Members of the opposition parties sit on the other side, to the left of the Speaker.

The members of the Cabinet—the Prime Minister and the Ministers—occupy the front seats, as do the leaders of the opposition parties on their side of the aisle. Members who do not hold Cabinet posts are sometimes called back-benchers.

The Prime Minister is standing and addressing the House. All speeches in the House of Commons are addressed to the Speaker, and so the Prime Minister is turned toward the Speaker, and is speaking, not reading his speech. A loud-speaker system has been introduced in the House of Commons and more recently a simultaneous translation system. Members using ear-phones can now hear a running English translation of a speech as it is made in French, or vice versa. Both English and French are official languages and have equal status in the House.

6. THE RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE

Black Rod has come to the House of Commons to require the members' attendance in the Senate Chamber.

The Speaker is not in his chair so the Mace is in its place under the table.

Sitting at the head of the table is the Clerk of the House, with his assistants on each side of him. He acts as Secretary, keeping a record of the proceedings of the House, and of bills introduced or passed, counting the votes when a vote has to be taken, and arranging the daily routine of the House.

Each day a record of proceedings, prepared by the Clerk, is printed and distributed, telling exactly what happened in the House on the preceding day. Similarly a printed sheet, called the Orders of the Day, is distributed indicating what business is to come before the House.

The desks in the aisle are occupied by shorthand reporters, one for French and one for English, who take down every word that is spoken. The reporters are relieved at frequent intervals, working in pairs. The daily record of speeches, as distinct from the Proceedings, is sometimes called Hansard, which was the name of the printer who first issued official records of the British House of Commons beginning in 1803.

7. THE MACE — THE SYMBOL OF PARLIAMENTARY POWER

When the Speaker of the House of Commons takes his seat the Sergeant-at-Arms places the Mace on its stand on top of the table and the House is ready to begin its business.

The House of Commons is an essential part, and perhaps the most important part, of Parliament, and the Mace is the symbol of its power, the highest power in Canada. The members of the House of Commons are elected by, and represent, the people of Canada, so that, in a sense, the Mace represents the power of the people, which is the supreme authority in a democratic government.

The Mace may occupy two other positions. It may be placed in the brackets which can be seen at the end of the table, so that it is level with the table top, or it may be placed under the table, lengthwise and resting on a cushion. It may be seen in this latter position in photograph No. 6 and this is its position when the House is not sitting or until the Speaker takes his seat and the Session begins.

Sometimes the House turns itself into a Committee of the whole. For example in discussion of the details of a bill, a simpler and more informal procedure is desirable and the Speaker leaves his chair and a chairman of committee presides. At this time the Mace is placed in the brackets at the end of the table.